



BATTLE CREEK

Historic District Commission

February 12, 2016

Governor Snyder
Rep. Chris Afenfoulis
Sen. Peter MacGregor
Rep. Lee Chatfield
House Local Government Committee
Senate Local Government Committee
Sen. Michael Nofs
Rep. John Bizon

RE: Opposition to Proposed Bill to Amend 1970 P.A. 169 Local Historic Districts Act, House Bill 5232 & Senate Bill 720

Dear Public Officials,

The City of Battle Creek Historic District Commission (HDC) strongly opposes House Bill 5232 and Senate Bill 720 and the proposed changes to 1970 Public Act 169 Local Historic District Acts. The City of Battle Creek has five local historic districts, all distinctly different from each other in regards to the types of resources and basis for the district, but none of them are more or less than important from each other. In the early 1980's the community recognized the important architectural and cultural assets provided by the various districts and after a lengthy, engaged process the City Commission approved the districts. Since that time, the designation has helped to rehabilitate a number of buildings, and has not deterred rehabilitation or investment. While all local historic districts use the Secretary of the Interior Standards for rehabilitation in order to review requests, there is enough discretion built in that each community can tailor decisions based on what's appropriate for that specific district. For example, the Old Advent Town Historic District was approved as a district based primarily on cultural reasons (as opposed to architectural quality) and therefore the HDC takes that into consideration when reviewing requests for work upon a historic resource.


Michigan law regarding historic districts is based on federal law governing historic resources, and (currently) gives the authority to communities to best determine their own historic resources and how best to protect them. The proposed legislation essentially strips a community's ability to make the decision that's most appropriate for them by making it very difficult to establish a district (already lengthy and cumbersome process) but then makes it nearly impossible for a community to maintain a district after one has been established.

The current system is not broken and the changes these Bills propose would not be fixes in any case. The idea that voters need to vote again and again on an issue that our City Commission has already passed is expensive and exceptionally inefficient. It is unnecessary and cumbersome that the State should have to issue a sunset clause on our local decision and mandate a City wide election every 10 years to keep our Local Historic Districts. Such redundancy is an unnecessary expense we do not want imposed on our community.

The City of Battle Creek Historic District Commission members feel House Bill 5232 and Senate Bill 720 should be rejected as these bills will weaken established protections for our historic resources and threaten the viability of the City of Battle Creek Local Historic Districts.

Sincerely,

Historic District Commission of
The City of Battle Creek, Michigan



Jim Hopkins, Chairman

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